

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **History**

In 1983, at a public hearing arranged by Supervisor Edmund D. Edelman, testimony was received which indicated that reported incidents of child abuse were increasing at an alarming rate. Additional statements at the public hearing revealed that public and private agencies believed that budget cuts since 1980 had impaired the County's ability to provide necessary protection and prevention services to children and youth at risk, abused or neglected.

As a result of the public hearing, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors ("Board") formed the Children's Services Task Force to examine the growing need for protection of endangered children and to make recommendations to improve the delivery of services to abused and neglected children in Los Angeles County.

In 1984, the Task Force presented its report containing 47 recommendations to the Board. Following the adoption of the Task Force's recommendations, on May 8, 1984, the Board created the Commission for Children's Services and the Department of Children's Services, which has been renamed Department of Children and Family Services ("DCFS") and the Commission for Children and Families ("Commission"). The creation of the Commission was the first organizational structure recommended as essential to the effective functioning of children's services.

#### **Vision and Function**

The Commission advises the Board in areas of child welfare and family policy. The Commission actively pursues all major issues affecting children, their families, and children's services in County government. The Commission's premise is that all children in our society are "at risk". In addition, as the County's resource for monitoring the efficacy of children's services, the Commission provides a forum to collect relevant information and thereafter present comprehensive and cohesive advice to the Board.

In formulating its recommendations to the Board, the Commission consults with County department heads, public officials of other jurisdictions, the community, providers and others. The Commission independently reviews the policies, procedures and systemic issues of various County departments serving children, monitors and evaluates all programs administered by County departments and agencies which provide children's services, assesses service levels, and identifies community needs. Thereafter, the Commission makes independent judgments which are reported directly to the Board and may give its recommendation to the involved County departments. By focusing on the performance of the County system, the Commission is able to advise the Board about deficiencies and make recommendations on improving overall policy and

programs, thus enhancing accountability in the system. Thus, all involved agencies may be reviewed for their actions, priorities, and policies relative to the delivery of services to children and their families and where improvement is in order appropriate recommendations are made.

## **II. COMMISSION COMPOSITION**

### Members

The County Ordinance creating the Commission states that the Commission consists of 15 private citizens of Los Angeles County. Each Member of the Board appoints three persons to the Commission.

In selecting persons for the Commission, the Board members are urged to appoint persons who have knowledge and experience in the area of children's services. The County Ordinance also specifies that no Commission member may be a County employee, a County contractor, or an employee of a County contractor.

The members of the Commission provide volunteer service to the Board, to the County department heads and agencies, and to the children and their families.

## **III. BYLAWS AND OPERATING PROCEDURES**

### Principal Office

The Commission's principal office is Room B-22, Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

### Quorum

The presence in person of a majority of the appointed number of the Commission's voting members (50%+1) shall constitute a quorum for the transactions of business at any meetings of members.

### Voting

1. Each member of the Commission shall be entitled to one vote on each matter submitted to a vote of the Commission members.
2. All votes are to be recorded and reported in the minutes.
3. Members may not vote by proxy.
4. Ex-officio members appointed to the Commission do not vote.

### Action

Commission action requires a vote of approval for taking the action by the majority of Commissioners present, provided there is a quorum, except if these Policies and Procedures specify the action requires more than a majority, then the number of approving votes must be as specified.

### Commission Officers and Election

1. The officers of the Commissions shall be members of the Commission.
2. Commission officers shall be one Chairperson (“Chair”) and up to three Vice Chairpersons (“Vice Chairs”). The number of Vice Chairs shall be determined by the Commission.
3. Commission officers shall be chosen annually in September or October by a majority of members present.
4. The term of office is one year from the date of election or until removal.
5. A Chair may be recommended for election to a second consecutive term.
6. No Commissioner shall be eligible for recommendation for election to the Chair’s office for more than two consecutive terms.
7. The Commission may remove officers, as it deems necessary.

### Duties of the Commission

As specified in its County Ordinance, the Commission shall:

1. Review all programs administered by County departments, which provide children’s services for all children at risk.
2. Receive input from appropriate community groups and individuals concerning County-administered children services programs.
3. Review and make accommodations to the Board concerning legislation dealing with children’s services.
4. Make recommendations as necessary to various department heads to improve children’s services.
5. Make recommendations as necessary to the Board on action to be taken to improve children’s services.

6. Provide an annual report to the Board concerning status of children's services, along with recommendations for their improvement, to be utilized for broad community distribution and discussion.
7. Have the authority to monitor and evaluate progress in the implementation of the Children's Services Task Force's recommendations adopted by the Board for improving the delivery of children's services and, when necessary, recommend modifications of procedures to ensure compliance with the adopted recommendations.

#### Authority

1. Authority of Commission

The Commission has authority to carry out its duties. The Commission may adopt any reasonable operating rules for carrying out its duties so long as the rules it adopts are consistent with Chapter 3.68 of the County Code.

2. Authority of Member

Commission members have authority to participate on the Commission. An individual member has no authority independent of the Commission and therefore, may act alone with authority only as authorized by the Commission.

#### Duties of Chairperson ("Chair") and Vice Chairperson ("Vice Chairs") and Executive Committee

The Chair, Vice Chair, and Executive Committee shall have the authority to perform the duties below, as prescribed and limited herein.

1. The Chair of the Commission shall, if present, preside over all business and meetings of the Commission and through the Executive Director direct the work of the Commission staff including assignment of special projects to the Executive Director. In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chairs shall conduct the business matters and meetings. In the absence of both Chair and Vice Chair, the most recent past Chair shall conduct the business of the Commission, as follows:
  - a. Schedule meetings as deemed necessary in accordance with notice requirements of the Brown Act.
  - b. Set agenda and insure coverage of items within time allocated.
  - c. Conduct meetings by using preliminary procedures and in accordance with the requirements of the Brown Act.
    - Ensure all questions for guests/speakers are directed through the Chair.

- d. Be prepared on all agenda items prior to the meetings.
    - Discuss items with Commission members for information.
    - Discuss items with Executive Director for information.
    - Request from Executive Director or individual Commission member's additional relevant materials.
  - e. On behalf of the Commission, respond to issues from the community, private and public sectors, the Board, individual Supervisors, other Commissioners, commissions, departments, the media, etc.
  - f. Be thoroughly familiar with the Commission's bylaws, rules, policies and procedures.
  - g. Determine appropriate scheduling, seating, etc., of guest/speakers.
  - h. Send letters of invitation to individuals the Commission requests as guests/speakers.
  - i. Determine whether to grant or deny request to speak before the Commission and respond in writing accordingly.
  - j. Maintain, in so far as possible, a harmonious atmosphere in which the Commission may carry out its duties.
  - k. Restrict business to those issues under the Commission's purview and of concern to children and families.
  - l. Meet with individual Commissioners concerning issues of personal conduct, which conflict with Commission bylaws, policies and/or procedures.
  - m. Keep the two Vice Chairs informed on relevant issues.
2. The Chair shall assign Commissioners to the committees, and shall appoint committee chairpersons of each unless otherwise provided for in these Policies and Procedures. Such appointments shall be made annually, based upon reference indicated by each Commissioner for membership of such committees. The Commission Chair shall be an ex-officio member of all committees.
- a. On a regular basis, meet and confer with committee chairs on all issues the committees are addressing.
  - b. Attend as deemed appropriate meetings of committees as an ex-officio member.
  - c. Ensure that each Commissioner is serving on at least one committee.

- d. When appropriate and deemed necessary, establish new committees, subcommittees, task forces, etc.
  - e. Request committee chairs to produce committee reports, summaries, pertinent letters, etc., on behalf of the Commission for the Commission's review.
  - f. May designate a Vice Chair to act as Chair during any period time the Chair anticipates he or she will be unavailable. The term unavailable includes any circumstance the Chair anticipates will prevent the Chair from performing the duties of Chair.
3. The Chair can designate other members or the Executive Director to represent the Commission. However, any one so representing the Commission must act in accordance with the following:
- a. Be the spokesperson for the Commission.
  - b. Represent the views and positions of the Commission.
  - c. State Commission policies, procedures and positions that have been voted and passed.
  - d. Refrain from personal preferences on issues and represent only the Commission's position on issues.
  - e. Represent the Commission in meetings with County departments, officials, etc., in cooperation with the Vice Chairs or another Commissioner who will attend.
  - f. Call meetings with appropriate officials on relevant Commission issues.
  - g. Attend public meetings and debates on relevant issues of concern to the Commission.
  - h. Debate issues and/or makes speeches at public functions.
  - i. Set time and place for media interviews.
  - j. Request other commissioners to also attend media interviews.
  - k. Represent the Commission before the Board and the Board's deputies.
  - l. Expenses incurred in carrying out duties performed in representing the Commission, as designated herein, must be submitted no later than the next Commission meeting attended by the involved Commissioner to the Chair, for approval and where appropriate processing for reimbursement.

4. At the direction of the Commission or upon independent decision, the Chair may, consistent with direction received from the Commission, if any, and make legislative assignment to Commissioners, Committees of the Commission and Commission staff. Such assignments may include direction to any of the above to review pending legislation for presentation to the Commission to develop recommendations to the Board, or where Board position exist, to represent the Commission as appropriate to achieve the Board's position.
5. The Chair shall approve all Commission matters, other than matters decided by the Commission as a whole, before being submitted to the Board, County department heads, officials of other jurisdictions, etc.
  - a. Write and/or review all correspondence on behalf of the Commission.
  - b. Meet and/or confer with individual commissioners regarding consistent absences, and consistent late arrivals and/or early departures, which disrupt meetings.
6. The Chair may form an Executive Committee to carry out any or all of the functions described in paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 of this subsection. The Executive Committee will consist of the Chair, the two Vice Chairs and any other Commissioner or Commissioners the Chair wishes to appoint. Thereafter, at the discretion of the Chair, the Executive Committee may operate as the authority or in an advisory capacity only. If the Chair elects to transfer authority to an Executive Committee, the Chair must inform the Commission at the next Commission meeting of the scope of the transferred authority. Action by the Executive Committee requires a majority vote of the Committee. However, in the event of a tie vote, the vote of the Chair or acting Chair will determine whether the action will be taken. Any authority transferred to the Executive Committee will return to the Chair upon expiration of the term of the Chair forming the Executive Committee.
7. The designated Vice Chair shall act, as the Chair during any period the Chair is unavailable. If no Vice Chair is so designated, the two Vice Chairs shall agree as to which one will act as Chair, failing such agreement, the two Vice Chairs will rotate acting as Chair on a monthly basis until the Chair is available, and the Vice Chair with the longest time as Commissioner will act as Chair during the first month of the Chair's unavailability. If neither Vice Chair has been designated to act as Chair, but one of the Vice Chairs is also unavailable to perform the duties of the Chair, then the available Vice Chair shall act as the Chair during the unavailability of the Chair and Vice Chair.

#### Duties and Responsibilities of all Commission Members

Commission members shall:

1. Be thoroughly familiar with and follow Commission bylaws, Policies and Procedures.

2. Not be County employees, nor contract directly or indirectly with County, or be employees of agencies contracting with the County.
3. When designated by the Chair (in the Chair's absence, the Vice Chair), serve as spokesperson for the Commission.
4. State the Commission's policies, procedures, positions, etc., that have been voted and passed.
5. When stating personal positions that have not been considered by the Commission, state 'up front' that is one's own personal opinion, not that of the Commission. Fairly represent the Commission's views and positions on issues and not make personal statements, which reflect contrary individual positions.
6. Refrain from use of Commission letterhead, except for purpose approved by the Chair or the Commission.
7. Refrain from calling meetings regarding issues within the Commission's authority, except as approved by the Chair or the Commission.
8. When invited to participate in any forum, as a Commissioner, attempt to get prior approval to participate and direction from the Chair or Commission regarding the Commission position on anticipated issues. If time does not permit obtaining prior approval to participate and direction on anticipated issues then the Commissioner should decline the invitation to participate unless to do so would likely work to the detriment of children, families or the Commission. Under any circumstances where participation occurs, the participating Commissioner should to the extent feasible confine his or her remarks to known Commission positions. Any other remarks, the Commissioner feels he or she must make, are to be clearly distinguished as heretofore undetermined by the Commission and only a personal belief of the Commissioner would be. The participating Commissioner must provide a full report regarding the participation at the next Commission meeting he or she attends.
9. When designated by the Chair, represent the Commission, in meetings with County departments, public officials of other jurisdictions, the community, the media, etc., and discuss relevant issues of concern to the Commission and/or its committees.
10. After officially representing the Commission, report to the Commission at its next Commission meeting.
11. Inform the Commission of any standing and short-term obligations to act in representative capacity for outside groups with interests relevant to Commission concerns. Such a relationship is subject to review by the Commission.

12. Submit, in advance, all correspondence and/or communications on behalf of the Commission and/or its committees to the Commission Chair for review and approval.
13. Regularly attend the Commission's General Meetings. (Refer to "General Meeting and Committee Meeting Absences.")
14. Serve and actively participate in the work of at least one of the Commission's standing committees.
15. When serving as a committee chair, or co-chair, head of a task force, etc., report to the Commission Chair any matters of which the Commission should be aware and any recommended Commission action.
16. Forward to the Chair any receipt of or request for review, assistance, complaints, inquiries, or notification of problems, within the purview of the Commission.
17. Unless part of a case review team, as assigned by the Chair, Commission members shall not conduct case investigations.
18. Commission members shall not utilize their official capacity to appeal case decisions.
19. Not assign work to Commission staff unless approved by the Commission Chair. Approved assignments will be made through the Executive Director.
20. Keep abreast and read all correspondence, documentation, etc., sent to them by the Commission staff.
21. Advise the Commission staff of scheduled vacations and absences.
22. Call and advise the Commission staff in advance, when unable to attend General Meetings and committee meetings, etc.
23. Maintain the confidentiality of information as required by law.
24. Commission members shall refrain from all acts in an official capacity except as authorized herein.
25. Commission members shall be willing to serve as Chair of the Commission.

#### Procedure for Violation of Duty

1. The Chair, or where appropriate under these procedures, the Vice Chairs or Executive Committee, shall inform the involved Commissioner of the violation and provide a written statement of the conduct which is in violation of the Commissioner's duty and the recommended corrective action. A copy will be provided to the Commissioner and the

original maintained at the Commission staff so long as the Commissioner remains on the Commission.

2. Thereafter, if the conduct continues, the Chair or where appropriate under these procedures, the Vice Chair or Executive Committee, may take the following actions:
  - a. Limit the involved Commissioner's participation in Commission activities to area not impacted by the prescribed conduct.
  - b. Notify Board and each of the Board offices of the limitations set on the involved Commissioner's participation and the reasons for this action.

#### General Meeting and Committee Meeting Absences

It is the duty of each Commissioner to inform staff in advance when he or she is unable to attend a meeting.

Unexcused absence by a Commissioner for more than 25 percent of General Meetings or Committee meetings, during any 12-month period, shall constitute a violation of duty by the Commissioner. Staff will apprise Commissioners before absences reach the 25 percent level.

### **IV. GENERAL MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION**

#### Place of Meeting

The place of meeting for monthly and special meetings of the Commission shall be fixed by the consensus of all members. If no such place has been fixed, the place of meeting shall be the principal office of the Commission.

#### Meeting Time

Meetings shall be convened promptly at 10:00 a.m. When a quorum is not present, the order of the agenda will be altered to begin with items not requiring action by the Commission.

#### Order of Meetings

1. The agenda shall include: Call to order; Introduction of Audience; Minutes; Report to Chair; Report from Executive Director, where appropriate; Committee Reports; Special Reports of guests invited to make presentations; Commission Business; Opportunity for members of the public to address the Commission.
2. County employees or members of the public shall notify the Commission not less than seven days in advance of the next Commission meeting of any issue they wish to appear on the agenda. The Chair shall have discretion with respect to agenda items absent direction from the Commission.

3. Matters which do not appear on the agenda may be acted upon by the Commission if by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members, or if less than two-thirds (2/3) of the members are present, a unanimous vote of those members present, Commission carries a motion that an emergency exists which requires immediate action on the item and that the need for action came to the attention of the Commission after the agenda was posted.
4. Notification of meeting: Minutes of the previous meeting and agenda of the upcoming meeting should be mailed to Commissioners no later than three (3) business days before the upcoming meeting. Whenever possible, an explanation of agenda items shall accompany the notification. Absent Commissioners shall receive all material distributed at missed meetings.
5. Meetings open to public: All meetings shall be open and public. Visitors are encouraged to attend Commission meetings.
  - a. Request to address Commission on agenda item: Any person may request to be heard on an agenda item before it is acted upon.
  - b. Addressing the Commission: No person shall address the Commission until he or she has first been recognized by the Chair. All persons addressing the Commission shall give their names and affiliations for the record. The Chair may, in the interest of facilitating the business of the Commission, limit the amount which a person may use in addressing the Commission.
  - c. Public Comment: Notwithstanding any other provision of these rules, members of the public shall have the right to address the Commission on items of interest which is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission. Prior to the public comment, the Chair shall announce the total amount of time available for such comment, and where appropriate set limits to the time to be spent on particular issues and the amount of time available to each individual speaker.
6. All persons are encouraged to bring matters affecting children's services to the attention of the Commission.

#### Announcements

Whenever possible, announcements shall be submitted to Commission staff by Thursday preceding the upcoming meeting to be put in written form for the Commission and others attending the meeting.

Announcements shall be limited to matters directly affecting children.

#### Agenda Formulation

Items may be placed on the agenda in the following manner:

1. By order of the Commission documented in the minutes.
2. By advance written request of a person or organization with approval of the Chair.
3. By advance request of a Commissioner with approval of the Chair.
4. Wherever possible, agenda items shall be accompanied by relevant documentation when mailed.
5. A record of any non-approved request to place an item on the agenda from any person or organization must be available at the Commission office for thirty (30) days after the request is rejected.

#### Minutes of the General Meetings

1. Commission minutes are a summary of the actions taken and concerns expressed at the Commission meeting.
2. Should a Commissioner wish his/her statement to be included in the record or in the minutes verbatim, that Commissioner shall provide a written copy of that statement.
3. Should a Commissioner wish another Commissioner's statement included in the record or in the minutes verbatim. The Commissioner seeking such inclusion must make this request to the Chair or acting Chair. The Chair or acting Chair will determine whether or not the record or minutes will be so augmented. If the Chair or acting Chair determines the record or minutes should include the verbatim statement as requested, the Commissioner seeking inclusion shall describe the statement to be included in writing, thereafter the actual statement shall be transcribed verbatim from the tape recording of the meeting into the record or the minutes as appropriate.
4. At any time, the Chair may request verbatim transcription of minutes or statements made before the Commission by public officials or any individual or group making a presentation.
5. A member's request to have statement from the General Meeting transcribed verbatim for inclusion in the minutes must be approved by the Chair. If approved, the Chair will either direct the staff to prepare a verbatim transcription of the statement, or will direct staff to give a copy of the tape containing the statement to the requesting Commission member to prepare a verbatim transcription of the statement. In the latter case, the member will submit the transcription to the staff for inclusion in the minutes no later than seven (7) days preceding the next scheduled General Meeting.
6. Tape recordings of all the Commission's General Meetings shall be retained, on file, for a period of one year. At the direction of the Commission or the Chair, specific tapes may be retained for a longer period.

7. Except as indicated in number 4 above, the original tape recordings of any of the Commission meetings will not be released or duplicated until the minutes of that meeting have been approved. Once approved and finalized for distribution, the recordings may be copied and released upon receipt of a written request. (However, a response to a Public Record Act request must be made within ten (10) days of receipt. Therefore, where approval does not occur within that time, an unapproved tape may be realized.)

## **V. COMMITTEES**

### Formation of Committees

The Commission may establish committees at its discretion, define any limit their scope and authority, and establish rules of operation.

### Committee Purpose and Scope of Authority

The purpose and authority of committees shall be determined by the Commission at the time the committee is formed. However, the Commission may modify said purpose and authority at any time.

A committee may act within the delegated authority without further approval by the Commission. However, except in the event of an Emergency as delineated below, and as provided under Duties and Responsibilities of Commission Members herein,. no committee or committee member shall make or issue policy statements, recommendations, or media releases without prior approval of the Commission, Further, any committee activate which implies action by the Commission or is outside delegated authority is not permitted without specific Commission approval.

If the committee chairperson (“Com Chair”) believes that an emergency situation exist, and that delay of action to the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting could adversely impact the life, safety, or well-being of a child receiving services from County department’s ability to deliver services to the children in its charge or damage the Commission’s ability to function, then committee action may be taken without Commission approval provided all of the following conditions are met:

1. Written notification of the intended action, along with certification that the verbal approval required in (b) below has been obtained and proof of the endorsement required by subsection (c) below, must be delivered to the Commission office not less than four hours prior to the time the action is taken. The notification, certification and proof of endorsement may be delivered personally or sent by Fax.
2. A verbal approval to do the intended action must be obtained from the Chair or if unavailable the Vice Chair. Except, if both the Chair and the Vice Chair are unavailable, the verbal approval may be obtained from any 2 commissioners who are not on the involved committee.

3. The intended action and its characterization as an emergency must be endorsed by the majority of commissioners serving on the Committee.

The Commission Chair shall give full written report of any such emergency action taken at the next regularly scheduled General Meeting.

Following the Commission's action establishing as committee, the Executive Director shall provide from the minutes a statement of the committee's purpose and authority. A copy shall be provided to the Com Chair and the original retained in the Commission Office.

Children's issues can be brought by members of the Commission or members of the community at-large to appropriate standing committees. The appropriate committee has responsibility for review and development of issues.

### Functions

Committees shall perform the following functions within their purpose:

1. Identification of areas of concern to children; formulation of a statement of major problems and barriers; examination of the best means for the Commission to effectuate the needed change; and recommendation for action.
2. In-depth consideration of any systemic issues thought to need review through gathering, organizing, examining, and assessing relevant information and where appropriate recommend improvements of the involved departments and the Commission.

## **VI. AMENDMENTS**

1. Any provision of these Policies and Procedures may be amended by the Commission.
2. Amendments to the Sections III (Bylaws and Operating Procedures), and VI (Amendments) require that Notice of the Proposed Change be given to each member of the Commission at least 30 days prior to the action item being placed on the agenda and thereafter carried by two-thirds (2/3) of the total number of then appointed Commissioners regardless of the number 2/3 Commissioners present.
3. Amendments to any other provision of these Policies and Procedures requires that notice of the proposed change be given to each member of the Commission at least 30 days prior to the action item being placed on the agenda, and thereafter carried by a majority of the Commissioners then appointed regardless of the number of Commissioners present.